

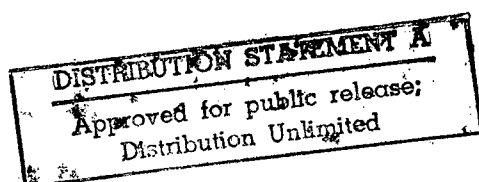
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PEOPLE'S COMMUNES AND WATER CONSERVANCY  
IN COMMUNIST CHINA

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PEOPLE'S COMMUNES AND WATER  
CONSERVANCY IN COMMUNIST CHINA

[The following is a full translation of an article written by Asakawa Kenji, appearing in Ajia Keizai Jumbo (Asian Economic Thrice Monthly), Tokyo, 1 June 1960, pages 4-10.]

What Has Become Of The Flooded  
Areas Of Kwangtung Province?

It is now June. In mid-June 1, 1959, heavy rain fell in Kwangtung Province, causing the Tung Chiang to rise above its banks and inflict much damage on many areas. According to T'ao Chu, First Secretary of the Kwangtung Province Party Committee, 4.7 million Chinese mou (hua-mou) under early rice crops were inundated as well as 160,000 mou under late-ripe rice seedlings and 1.1 million mou under peanuts, potatoes, jute and other industrial crops; 200,000 houses collapsed, 28,000 irrigation projects destroyed, 2 million persons afflicted, 187 persons were killed and 29 persons were missing. Thus, damage caused by the flood in Kwangtung Province last year was much greater than that by the typhoon of Ise Bay which struck Japan in September of this year, both in the size of the afflicted area and degree of damage.

However, the damaged areas were restored very rapidly. Tu Tao-cheng made a report on "My visit to Flood-afflicted Tseng-ch'eng Hsien" in Jen-min Chung-Kuo (People's China, February 1960). Tseng-ch'eng Hsien is in the lower reaches of Tung Chiang and suffered worse damage than any other area along the river. Tu Tao-cheng had visited Tseng-ch'eng Hsien three times: early in July and immediately after the flood in August and in November of last year. According to his report, the area had been perfectly rehabilitated by November even though it had suffered very severely from the heavy rains and the drought which followed the flood. The villages looked very beautiful. The output of late-ripe rice in that area amounted to 160 million, an increase of 13.7 percent

over the corresponding period of last year. Output was so successful that it made up for the entire loss of early-ripe rice crops. All of the People's Communes in the afflicted areas could not only secure sufficient rice to support them but also reserve rice to support them for one or two months. His article reads in part as follows:

"Since one disaster had been followed by another, the Party and the people's communes had to devote all their power to fighting the flood and the drought. As a result the restoration of houses was delayed to some extent. However, on my third visit to Tseng-ch'eng Hsien, it was very impressive to see all aftermath of the flood eliminated. The villages appeared more beautiful than before the flood."

"It was July 1st that I visited Huan-chu Ts'un for the first time, when this village, with 100 households in it, had all houses collapsed in the flood except a shrine and a mess hall. The villagers were living in shacks, in the shrine, and in the mess hall. On my second visit to this village, August 6th, I saw things back in their places with the roads restored. Some villagers had moved into quite spacious temporary dwellings which were tile-roofed and boarded up. In the eastern part of the village, five dwellings were being built. In the center of the village a road meters in width, ran from east to west lined on either side by two-story brick dwellings. I visited about ten other villages where people were moving into new houses whose walls had just been white-plastered. In some villages I saw a number of new houses just white washed with their doors pasted with papers on which distichs were written in red ink."

Before the flood the farm houses in this neighborhood were built of mud bricks which had not been baked, and with nothing put on the bricks. Only the houses formerly owned by landlords had their outer walls white-plastered. The villages must have given the reporter a favorable impression because the walls of the new houses were all white-plastered. Formerly all two-story brick houses were owned by either landlords or rich peasants, with the peasants living only in one-story houses. All the newly built houses were "wooden framed with walls built of bricks and white-plastered; roofs were black; all the window frames were painted; and all the rooms were well lighted. Five households were accommodated in one building; each household had a large room both upstairs and downstairs; the large room on the first floor was divided into a parlor and a bedroom. At the back of the building was a small yard, where were also the kitchens, bathrooms, pigpens and hen-houses." For those who

who have seen old rural areas of China it would be very difficult to imagine the kind of villages which have emerged from the recent flood. It is to be remembered that the flood had occurred only half a year before the new farm houses described here were built. One factor for such a rapid rehabilitation may be the vast State investments, but the main factor may be that unified plans were formed, labor supply was organized and funds were accumulated by the people's communes.

#### Rehabilitation Activities By Shih-t'an People's Commune

Shih-t'an People's Commune suffered the worst losses in Tseng-ch'eng Hsien. Shih-t'an People's Commune is situated in the south-eastern part of Tseng-ch'eng Hsien, faces the lower reaches of Tung Chiang, and Tseng Chiang; it has always been threatened by flood disasters; it suffered worse losses from the flood of June 1959 than any of the other people's communes of Tseng-ch'eng Hsien when it incurred a loss of 5 million yuan. Chung-Kuo Nung-Pao (Chinese Agriculture, No. 19, 1959). Shih-t'an People's Commune has 12,000 households, over 135,000 mou of arable land including about 100,000 mou of paddy fields and 29,000 mou of dry fields and 2,600 mou of fishponds; it has 22,000 laborers including both full-time and part-time workers. It was in the summer of 1958 that the commune was organized; the harvest of the late fall was so successful that the settled accounts of 1958 indicated that the income per capita amounted to 95 yuan representing an increase of 63 percent over 1956 when the harvest was also very successful (in 1956, the per capita income was 58 yuan).

Since the commune was first organized, industry has been actively built up and has been combined with agriculture, forestry, fishing and subsidiary industries with the result that production has been rapidly raised; one year after the commune was organized, the accumulated public fund amounted to 349,000 yuan or about 52 million yen. In the first half of 1959, income from industry and transportation alone rose to 1.2 million yuan, and the income from industry by various production groups more than doubled the incomes before the organization of the commune. (The source of information contained in this paragraph is the article, "The Shih-t'an People's Commune which has been Rapidly Restoring Its Production Capacity Since the Flood Disaster", Chung-Kuo Nung-pao (Chinese Agriculture), No. 19, 1959).

Such a general expansion of production and accumulation of funds enabled the commune to cope successfully with the flood disaster. A report by the Tseng-ch'eng Hsien Party Committee reads in part: "The rapid expansion of industry and general production of the Shih-t'an People's Commune has enabled it to cope with flood disasters, and this should be regarded as the major factor in the rapid restoration of production and reclamation of land after suffering from such a formidable disaster in 1959". (See the above article.)

[Almost] all the paddy fields of this commune were inundated by the flood of June 1959. Of 158 villages included in the commune, 148 were flooded, with 12,394 houses collapsed; of 57,787 mou under early-ripe rice, 51,203 mou were inundated with 152,516 piculs or about 7,625 tons of rice lost; in addition, 1,543 mou under late-ripe rice-seedlings, 17,600 mou under various other crops, and 4,454 of fishponds were flooded with 15,126 piculs or about 750 tons of fish lost. The losses in houses and furniture were estimated at a total of over 5.2 million yuan, representing an average loss of 408 yuan per household and 103 yuan per person.

For details of the relief work during the flood, read the article by TU Tao-cheng in the February 1960 issue of Jen-min Chung-Kuo (People's China). The subsequent rehabilitation /of the afflicted area/ and the restoration of production will be discussed in following paragraphs.

1. Repair of Embankments. In this part of the country, arable land is low in level and apt to be inundated by water from the nearby rivers. For protection from rivers, the land is surrounded by mud embankments known as the surrounding embankment. It was estimated that about one million cubic meters of surrounding embankments and levees were in need of repair. It was necessary to repair 280,000 cubic meters before the summer plantings were started with two large-scale and six medium scale surrounding embankments included. When the water in the river began to go down, repair projects were started immediately. Under the direction of the Party Committee in the commune, about 12,000 personnel and 400 boats were put to work repairing the embankments and filling up the breaches in them along the upper reaches of the river.

But on July 6th, heavy rain began to fall in the upper and lower reaches of the Tseng-Chiang, causing the river to rise rapidly, until the newly constructed embankments were only one centimeter above water. The Party Committee mobilized 1,800 members of eight production groups that received no

benefit from the embankments to participate in an intensive fight with the flood under the slogan, "Raise the mud embankment one foot if the water goes up one inch". The work went on day and night for twenty-five days during which time 350,000 cubic meters of embankments were repaired. Thus, the fight against the swelling river was won.

2. Cultivation of Crops. It was impossible to revive the crops buried in mud during the flood. There was no alternative but to sow anew and cultivate crops all over again. However, the Shih-t'an People's Commune had more land than the available labor supply could work: even if 70 percent of its labor supply was to be used in farm work, each worker had to work an average of 11 mou per day. Moreover, the arable land was not distributed evenly among the production groups. Therefore, the Party Committee of the commune organized a division of labor and cooperation among the entire production groups and began work under the slogan "when the flood leaves one foot of land, we shall plant that much land". In eight days, rice seedlings were transplanted on 1,300 mou and by the setting-in of autumn, transplanting of late-ripe rice seedlings was successfully completed. The Party Committee mobilized 1,550 members of the production groups that did not have too much paddy field to transplant and had them help the groups that had too much land to transplant; 500 draft animals were also used for the same purpose. Moreover, 4,000 persons were used to work five pumps and 260 pumping water-wheels in draining land of water. Thus, agricultural production was restored and only one week after the flood went down, all the factories resumed their work and subsidiary industries were also resumed.

3. Restoration of Houses. This has been treated in the article by TU Tao-cheng already referred to. The commune mobilized 517 carpenters and plasterers to repair and build 2,164 ken (including 272 ken which was newly built) by August 28th, representing 34 percent of the 7,295 ken provided in the building plan.

What has been accomplished by the Shih-t'an People's Commune shows how rapidly the damage and destruction done by flood have been restored and how effective the work of the people's communes concerned have proved in restoring the damages and destructions done by the flood.

## Construction of Water Conservation Facilities by People's Communes

Advances in water conservation facilities were a major factor in the creation of the people's commune in China. It was impossible to expand agricultural output of China without expanding water conservation facilities; it was also impossible to protect Chinese agriculture against natural disasters without expanding water conservation facilities. Therefore, in the People's Republic of China, upon the cooperativization of agriculture in 1956, water conservation facilities were begun to be built up at a rapid pace along these priority lines laid down by the Chinese Communist Party: "give priority to small-scale projects, to storing water supply, and to construction of water conservation facilities by cooperatives". Even though priority was to be given to small scale projects, these projects were to be built in coordination with the large projects constructed by the State; water storage projects were to be given priority, but these projects were to be built in connection with the needed drainage projects and running water projects; priority was to be given to construction by cooperatives, yet cooperatives were to build individual projects or part of projects under unified planning of the State.

Cooperativization of agriculture was conducive to rapid construction of water conservation facilities. However, it required a large amount of labor supply to construct water conservation facilities; there were also many problems in deciding upon the sites of even a medium or small size reservoir which could not be solved by using the land of a single cooperative. Furthermore, it was necessary in building a long aqueduct to use much arable land from many cooperatives which would not get any benefit from the reservoir. It has already been made clear that such problems could not be solved by small size cooperatives unless they were merged, and that this consideration had led to the creation of people's communes. It was quite natural that, since the creation of people's communes, many water conservation facilities have been constructed at a rapid pace. On this, LI Pao-hua Vice-Minister of Water Conservancy and Electric Power, states in his article celebrating the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Republic:

"During the nine years before the creation of people's communes 717 medium size dams were built in all of China with a total water capacity of 103 billion cubic meters;



while in the one year after the creation of communes, as many as 1,078 medium size dams were built in all of China with a total water capacity of 208 million cubic meters; thus in the one year after the creation of people's communes twice as many dams were built as in the nine years prior to the appearance of people's communes. ("Let us Continue to Build Water Conservancy Facilities with the Red Flag Hoisted High" by LI Pao-hua in Shui-li Fa-tien-li Chih (Water Conservancy and Electric Power Generation), No. 19, 1959).

Even though a great deal of water conservancy facilities had been constructed, it was impossible to withstand the flood caused by the heavy rains in valleys of the Tung Chiang of Kwangtung Province. As a result much damage and destruction was caused as described above. However, these facilities played a great part in combatting the drought which started in north-east China and spread to north China, central China and north-west China during that same year. On this, FU Tso-i, Minister of Water Conservancy and Electric Power declared in his statement at the second session of the second period of the All-China People's Congress held in April 1960:

"In 1959, our country suffered from the worst of natural disasters. As for droughts, in the summer when the need for water was great, 400 million were affected. However, the threatened disaster was averted by the great power of our people's communes that worked hard under Party Committees at various levels and the people's Government, as well as by the water conservation facilities that had been constructed over a period of several years. Thus, in most cases arable land was successfully protected against drought, except for a very small area of land."

In the course of the fight against the droughts of 1959, water conservation facilities were further expanded in the valleys of the Chun Ho and the Ta-yun Ho. On this, FU Tso-i states as follows: "In 1959, 31 large-scale dams with a water capacity of over 100 million cubic meters each were constructed, totalling over 10 billion cubic meters; more than 1,000 medium size dams were built; 1,200 irrigation districts were built covering over 10,000 mou each; and a great many small-size reservoirs were constructed totalling 13 billion cubic meters, increasing the irrigated area of land by 70 million mou. Preliminary measures have been taken to conserve water and earth on 80,000 square kilometers of land, and preliminary steps have been taken to reclaim 63 million mou by using machines of 14 million horsepower to drain and irrigate the marshes.

Since a great many instances of the fight against drought by the people's communes and the expansion of water conservation facilities during the fight have been cited in Jen-min Jih-pao (People's Daily) in Chung-kuo Nung-pao (Chinese Agriculture), and in statements by delegates to the recent session of the People's Congress, we shall not consider that subject. The reader is referred to a report by KAO Shih-shau "The Triumph of Communes over Droughts" which appeared in the Japanese edition of Jinmin Chugoku (People's China) for November 1959. In that report, the reader will find a vivid picture drawn in concrete terms of the fight by communes against droughts and the expansion of water conservancy facilities. What is described in the report applied not only in Su Hsien, but to the rest of China.

#### Water Conservancy Facility Construction by People's Communes in 1960

Unusually severe droughts began to occur in early spring this year in North China and spread to Northeast China. The People's Communes launched drives on droughts when they began to plow land in spring, by constructing water conservation facilities; they worked under the slogans "If heaven refuses to drop rain, man will make it come down", and "Let us turn drought into bumper crops by constructing water conservation facilities". They also observed "The Directions Concerning the Continuation Of Large-Scale Water Conservation Facility Construction And Manure Production Between This Winter And Next Spring" published in October 1959 by the Party Central Committee and the State Council.

In 1960, as well as in 1959, water conservancy facilities have been constructed with emphasis on small-scale projects, on storing water and on construction by people's communes. However, the construction of large-scale facilities by the State has also been in progress on an extensive basis. At the recent session of the All-China People's Congress, FU Tso-i, Minister of Water Conservancy and Electric Power made the following statement:

"The number of projects with a capacity of over 100 million cubic meters including both those that are continued and those new ones that are already in progress is more than two hundred; of the projects seven have a capacity of 5 billion to 10 billion cubic meters each. As many as 1,400 medium size dams with a water capacity of 10 million to 100 million cubic meters each are to be constructed as well as several million small size dams. According to recent statistics,

the area of irrigated land expanded or improved as a result of the increase in water conservation facilities between last winter and this spring has exceeded the planned area of 260,000,000 mou. Preliminary water and earth conservation projects have been completed on 140,000 square kilometers, representing 93 to 140 percent of the planned area of 100,000 to 150,000 square kilometers for 1960. The area of adjusted marshes has amounted 40 million mou, representing 68 percent of the planned area of 60 million mou. As much as 27 billion cubic meters of stone and earth has been worked on, compared with planned 25 billion cubic meters. As a result of the expansion in water conservation facilities, a great change has been made in this field. By the time projects have been completed for various river systems, the landscape of China will have undergone a great change."

Colossal water conservation projects beyond all imagination conducted by the State have been in progress including the "Nan-shui Pei-t'iao" project [literally, move Southern water to the North]; at the same time the People's Communes have been conducting projects that simply defy description: In Kansu Province water was taken up mountain sides to dams there and networks of water conservation facilities have been built in hilly regions. As a result, in some areas even the shapes of hills and rivers have been altered; it is also believed that the climate of China will be changed by forests and trees newly created and planted together with newly completed water conservancy projects.

On the problem of the emphases placed on the water conservancy constructions in 1960, FU Tso-i, Minister of Water Conservancy and Electric Power, states:

"Water conservation construction in 1960 is to be based upon the "Directions Concerning The Continuation of Large-scale Water Conservancy Facility Construction And Manure Production Between This Winter and Next Spring" published in October 1959 by the Party Central Committee and the State Council. The first priority is to be given, as before, to the areas which are densely populated, whose output of food and raw cotton is proportionally great in the nation, and that are still quite likely to suffer from flood disasters. The second priority is to be given to the areas where the large part of inhabitants are engaged in industry and that are incapable of producing sufficient food to support their inhabitants; the second priority is also to be given to the lower reaches of the Yellow River where relatively much land is washed away by floods. The third priority is to be given to the areas inhabited by ethnical minorities

and the areas which used to be bases of revolutionary movement; special attention should be given to such areas. Water conservation activities must be intensified in the commodity bases for agricultural products; such bases should be advanced one step further, so as to have them irrigated, mechanized and electrified." Jen-min Jih-pao (People's Daily), 10 April 1960.

Water conservancy construction by the State in 1960 will be conducted in the order indicated above; people's communes also will further expand water conservation work through the drives against droughts already under way.

The People's Communes of China demonstrated their strength in 1959 when they combatted drought and flood; in the course of this combat the communes were further strengthened in their structure and organization. It is to be hoped that same results will be achieved through the water conservation projects in 1960. (22 May 1960)

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